[India's](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) [Indus River valley](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) was the site of one of the world's earliest civilizations. After invasions by Indo-[Aryans](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) and Macedonians, India gave birth to the major religions of [Hinduism](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False), [Buddhism](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False), and [Jainism](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False). By the dawn of the modern era, however, [Islamic](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) conquerors ruled India.   
  
Some experts believe that the inhabitants of India's earliest known civilization, the Harappans, who existed from roughly 2500 to 1700 BCE, fell victim to changes in the courses of the valley's mighty rivers, which had supplied all the agricultural lands with water. Thus weakened, the Harappans may have been easily overrun by raiders around 1700 BCE. Some of those raiders were Indo-Aryans from the Persian plateau; they would eventually develop Brahmanism, an early stage of Hinduism, and the [Sanskrit](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) language. It was also at about that point that the [caste system](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) of social classification first came into use.   
  
The first important Aryan kingdom was known as Magadha. It was during that monarchy's reign that the first preachers of Buddhism and Jainism sparked interest in those new religions. The founder of Jainism, Mahavira, died in 527 BCE, well before the first Buddhist council established the teachings of [Siddhartha Gautama](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) (the Buddha).   
  
In 325 BCE, Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great staged a huge expedition to India and occupied the northwestern province of [Gandhara](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False), which had been part of the [Persian Empire](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False). The occupation coincided with the rise of India's first Hindu empire in the north of the country under Chandragupta Maurya, who established the Mauryan Empire and later expelled Alexander the Great.   
  
Chandragupta's grandson, the Mauryan emperor Asoka, unified two-thirds of India and helped spread Buddhism's popularity throughout the region. However, the collapse of the Mauryan state in 185 BCE led to 200 years of chaos and unchecked invasions, which resulted in the total disintegration of the great empire into smaller kingdoms. It was not until the Gupta Empire reunited India in about 320 CE that the country began to prosper and entered into a golden age of sophisticated art and literature.   
  
As the forces of Hinduism steadily drove Buddhism out of its homeland, Islam also appeared in India. In the seventh and eighth centuries, Arab Muslims invaded the Indus valley. The first of those invaders arrived in the form of maritime traders, who brought their wares to Sind Province in India's northwest. By the 10th century, Muslim armies made incursions into India from the north.   
  
Beginning in 1001, Mahmud of Ghazna, a Muslim conqueror from the region of modern [Afghanistan](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False), began to invade India. Ruling as sultan, he ultimately annexed the state of Punjab and brought northwestern India under his power. Subsequently, Ghazna fell to the Ghurids, led by Muhammad Ghuri in the mid-12th century. The Ghurid conquerors founded the Delhi sultanate, the country's first Muslim kingdom, in the early 13th century. However, ruling such a massive territory proved difficult, and the sultanate finally yielded to the advances of the Islamic Turkic conqueror Timur in 1398.   
  
Several Muslim kingdoms succeeded the sultanate, but after the last Muslim invasion of India in 1526, those kingdoms were defeated by Babur, a Turkic invader from Afghanistan. Babur founded the powerful [Mughal Empire](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1564244?terms=chandragupta&webSiteCode=SLN_WGEO&returnToPage=%2fSearch%2fDisplay%2f1564244%3fterms%3dchandragupta&token=32FEF66A826AA146399FF8B2609E46A5&casError=False) and was followed as leader by Akbar, who consolidated the empire.